



# News Release

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## **Active West Nile virus season coming to an end in Washington**

*Summer 2015 had an increase of people with West Nile virus illness*

**OLYMPIA** -- The West Nile virus season is slowing down, but cases of illness in horses continue to be reported in central Washington. No cases of West Nile virus disease in humans with exposure in Washington have been reported since mid-September. This year's mosquito season brought significant West Nile virus activity, but as the temperatures drop, mosquito populations decline and mosquito monitoring by health officials is coming to an end.

So far this year, 22 people have been reported with [West Nile virus](#) illness, and one person died from the infection. Exposure most likely occurred in central Washington in all cases. The number of people reported with West Nile virus disease in 2015 is almost double the total number of reported cases from last year. Washington was the "hotspot" in the country this year for West Nile virus in horses; to date 35 horses have been infected with the virus. Out of the 35 horses, 15 died or were euthanized. The state [Department of Agriculture](#) recommends horse owners talk to their veterinarian about having their horses vaccinated in early spring for West Nile virus. This season seven birds and 157 mosquito samples also tested positive for the virus.

Now is a good time for people to reduce mosquito habitat by removing items that hold stagnant water around your home and yard. Put away unused toys, drain swimming pools, dump out buckets, flower pots, and bird baths, and make sure gutters are clean and drain easily. Water that has collected in items such as these may still have mosquito larvae growing in them. Another tip is to prevent tarps from holding water when covering firewood, boats, or outdoor furniture. Taking these precautions will help keep mosquitoes away from your home and their populations lower next spring.

Avoiding mosquito bites is the best prevention for West Nile virus, and the state Department of Health recommends using an [effective mosquito repellent](#) especially when hiking in wooded

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areas or when outdoors during dawn or dusk. West Nile virus usually circulates in Washington from June through October; cooler weather reduces mosquito populations, but continue to protect yourself from mosquito bites.

The West Nile virus information line 866-78-VIRUS, and [West Nile virus maps and statistics](#) are updated as conditions and detections change. [Online dead bird reporting](#) ends on October 31 and begins again May 1, 2016.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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